

63 W. G

No.
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24 Palmyra Plover

Inquiries - but requiring
further proof of the length of
the theory advanced -

Revised March 15th

1825

Inaugural Dissertation

on Hemorrhoids;

For the degree of M.D.

By Robert Mendenhall Huston, of Penna.

Apr. 1842
No. 1

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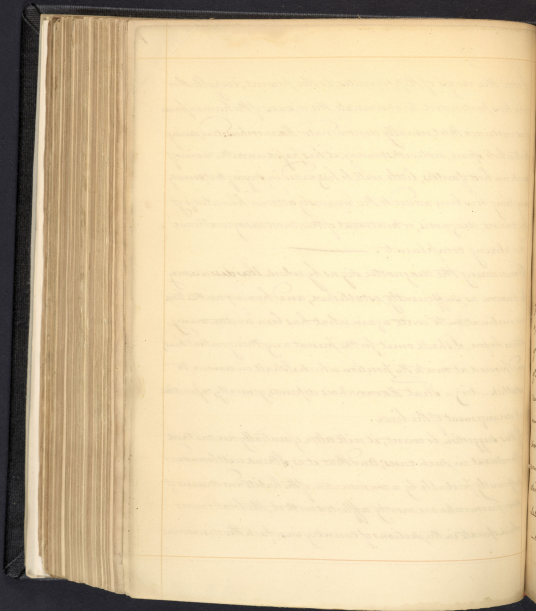
to the Editor of the N.E.

Editor, N. E. Review

From the days of Hippocrates to the present, every Author who has pretended to enumerate the diseases of the human frame has included that usually denominated Haemorrhoids; and, during that whole space, notwithstanding it has passed under the review of such an host of writers, little will be hazarded in saying that scarcely anything has been added to the previously attained knowledge of the causes, diagnosis, or treatment of this most disagreeable and perplexing complaint. —

Considering the diagnostic signs by which the disease may be known as sufficiently established, and having neither time nor inclination to write again what has been written many times before, I shall omit for the present any thing on that head, and proceed at once to the position which I shall endeavour to establish — viz — That Haemorrhoids depends generally on functional derangement of the liver.

If this suggestion be correct, it will alter essentially our method of treatment in such cases; and that it is, I think will be rendered sufficiently probable by a consideration of the habits and diseases of those persons who are mostly affected with it, the local causes which operate in the sections of country in which the disease more



generally prevails, and lastly, the success of a treatment ground
on this supposition. —

¶ The habits and diseases of those most obnoxious to it.

A sedentary course of life has ever been considered as strongly inclining
to the production of this malady: And those who are so circumstanced
will not un frequently be found to labour under, some of the forms of
melancholia, together with its concomitants, visceral obstruction, mostly
of the liver, dyspepsia with flatulence, constipation &c. And, ultimately,
haemorrhoidal symptoms. —

If we reflect for a moment we shall be convinced from our every day
experience of the vast utility of exercise in promoting the performance
of all the vital functions of the body, and especially the circulation
of the blood. If for instance a part of the body as an arm or a leg, be
restrained in its muscular motions, no matter how simple and
unproductive of violence the cause may be, it will nevertheless
soon be perceived to have lost its usual vigour; the muscles will be-
come almost paralyzed, the nervous sensibility of the part will be
diminished, and the plainest proofs of a weak or retarded circula-
tion will be manifest. (Does the diminished muscular energy and nervous sensibility
in this case, as Richardson supposes, result from the stypifying influence of retained venous blood?)

I have been thinking of you very much lately
 and wondering how you are getting on.
 I hope you are well and happy.
 I have been very busy lately
 but I have managed to find some time
 to write you a few lines.
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Whatever may be the immediate cause of so great a reduction of the vitality of a part or the whole of the body under the circumstances mentioned, I shall for my present purpose consider it as resulting from diminished circulation in the parts so affected, owing to the want of a proper degree of excitement, to stimulate the vessels to a full performance of their functions. —

In those cases in which the general habit suffers from this cause, we soon observe its effects in parts remote from the centre of life, and where the circulation is most languid, as the extremities, especially the inferior: — And, by analogy, I should suppose the liver to be early affected in these cases, from the slow circulation of blood through its parenchyma, and the low degree of vitality which it seems at all times to possess: And this supposition gains probability from the temper observable in the alimentary canal under such circumstances. —

If the impaired state of digestion be not owing to a deficiency of biliary liquor, to what cause is it attributable? — As, according to the notions of those Physiologists who assert that "digestion is most active during sleep," it should be increased rather than diminished during the more than usually quiescent state of the whole body.

But a much stronger argument in favour of the early suffering of the liver in persons of a sedentary habit, may be found in the great

liability to congestion from ~~the~~ slow and indirect circulation, and the frequent occurrence of other affections known to originate in a disturbance of that viscus, in those whose occupations and modes of life preclude the enjoyment of a reasonable and necessary degree of exercise. —

2^d Of the local causes which operate in the sections of Country in which Hemorrhoids more generally prevail. —

From the limited information which I possess as to the prevalence of the disease in question in particular districts of Country more than others, my remarks under this head will necessarily be brief.

Information on that ground was not to be obtained from Books, as the idea of the dependence of hemorrhoids on visceral obstruction never appears to have met with the notice of those who have written upon the subject; therefore the little that I possess could only be obtained by inquiry of such practitioners I found in different parts of the Country as I happened to be acquainted with. —

From the late Dr Tilton, Physician Surgeon General to the Army of the U.S. during the late war, I learned in conversation shortly before his death, that in the ~~lower~~ Counties course of his practice in the lower Counties of Delaware, where intermitting

may be said to be endemical, "he was very frequently consulted in cases of hemorrhoids." From his Nephew, the present Dr James Little, I learned at the same time that he had for many years suffered from "bleeding piles," which nothing removed until liberated for a supposed affection of the liver, since which he has felt nothing of either complaint. —

From Dr. Wilson, Roberts & Marsh, who reside in the upper & hilly parts of Del. Co Penn^a I learn that hemorrhoids is of very rare occurrence; while the Physicians who reside along the lower part of the same County and immediately in the vicinity of the Delaware Marshes, where intermittent & remittent fevers return as regularly as the Autumn, are as uniformly and frequently consulted for hemorrhoids as Rheumatism or Pleurisy. —

In the Almshouse of Del. Co Penn^a, the patients labouring under hemorrhoids during three years were regularly interrogated as to their ever having laboured under intermitting or remittent fevers: In a great majority of cases they had suffered from one or the other of these forms of fever at some period of their lives, and not a few had either at the time or at some time anteriorly, decided symptoms of either an acute or sub-acute affection of the liver or Spleen.

The facts which have been detailed are strikingly conclusive, and are susceptible of the most satisfactory proofs; and when it is recollected how few were the sources from which they could be derived by a student, their paucity will scarcely be objected to, nor will their importance be lessened by the want of support from writers when it is borne in mind that the suggestion is entirely new — And if after a more ample investigation it shall be established as a fact that hemorrhoids do prevail more generally in marshy than hilly districts of Country, of which I have not the slightest doubt, the conclusion will be irresistible that its dependence is upon visceral obstruction; And from the close connection existing between the intestinal canal and the liver (and the Vena Porta and haemorrhoidal veins) we shall be directed most unequivocally to a derangement of that organ as the cause of the complaint.

The facts stated are further strengthened by the view which has been already taken of the great liability of the liver to become diseased in persons of a sedentary habit; and that a want of due action in that organ is alone sufficient for the production of the disease under consideration, will be rendered

Still more probably by a moment's reflection upon its functions and influence on the alimentary canal. —

It is known to be the chief if not the only organ concerned in the secretion of bile, and that the proper digestion of the food depends much upon the due quantity and quality of that fluid.

Whether the bile when mixed with the matrice alimenticia exerts a chemical influence upon it, so as to produce a separation of the nutritious from the excrementitious parts, if it is not necessary now to inquire; but that by its presence in the decodenum it stimulates by its active properties the parietes of that intestine to a more vigorous action, and that its combination with the excrementitious parts of the alimentary matter renders it more stimulating to the lower intestines, so as to induce a greater contraction upon their contents and so forward its expulsion, are facts universally acknowledged, and are quite sufficient for my present purpose — Hence we learn the important part which healthy bile performs in promoting the peristaltic motion, and from thence may readily infer that a change in its properties or deficiency in its quantity would be followed by a sluggish discharge of the excrement, a permanent mechanical

influence upon the veins of the rectum would be the consequence, and ultimately the existence of hemorrhoidal tumours result of necessity. But the greater probability is that in derangements of the liver where a torpid state is induced, that a like torpor is produced in the intestines and their veins from the nearly sympathy existing, independantly of the want of stimulus from bile, and hence the hemorrhoidal affection would result from functional disease of the liver in a two fold way. —

That it ever occurs, at least as a permanent affection, from mere mechanical pressure by the faeces, unassisted by other predisposing causes, is extremely doubtful; or that it is occasioned by pregnancy where no other predisposing cause exists, is I think not less so. Nor do I believe in the production of the complaint by stimulating medicines as blisters when applied to the coats of the intestines, unless so long continued as to induce a debility of the parts; As, under other circumstances than the latter, the pain and smarting would be found to be nothing more than a temporary affection — An increased excitement of the parts, instead of

diminished action as in genuine hæmorrhoids.

It now remains to notice the effects of a treatment grounded on the supposed hepatic origin of the disease.

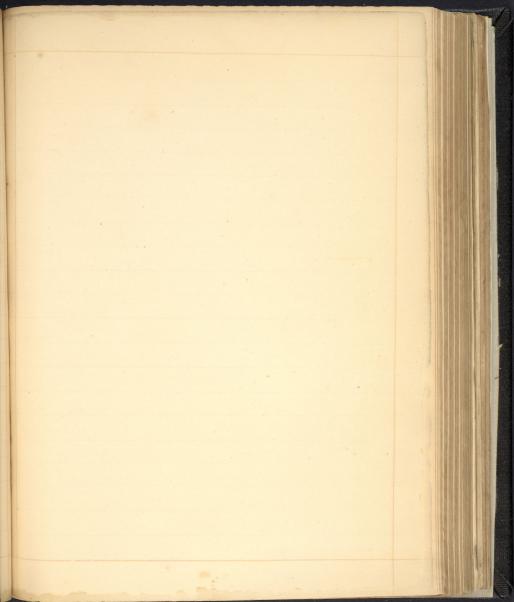
We have already noticed the influence of mercury in curing both the hepatic & hæmorrhoidal affections of Dr. Wilson. In a number of cases treated, some with mercury and others with the mineral acids, particularly the nitric, in the Almshouse of Del. Co. Penna. in the years 1818-19 & 20, the most convincing proofs were exhibited of its efficacy. In several long standing cases no other indications of visceral obstruction were discoverable than a slight discolouration of skin, sluggishness of the bowels with depression of mind, or occasional slow fever, and to which I would add the existence of hæmorrhoids.

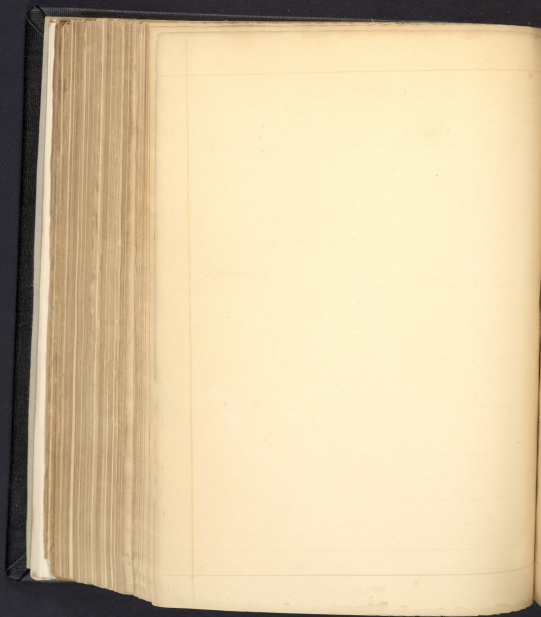
By a diligent use of mercury or the acids for some time so as to produce an attenuative effect upon the system, every case was relieved, and several permanently cured. In some whose hepatic symptoms were more strongly marked, frictions with the acids over the region of the liver or the ap-

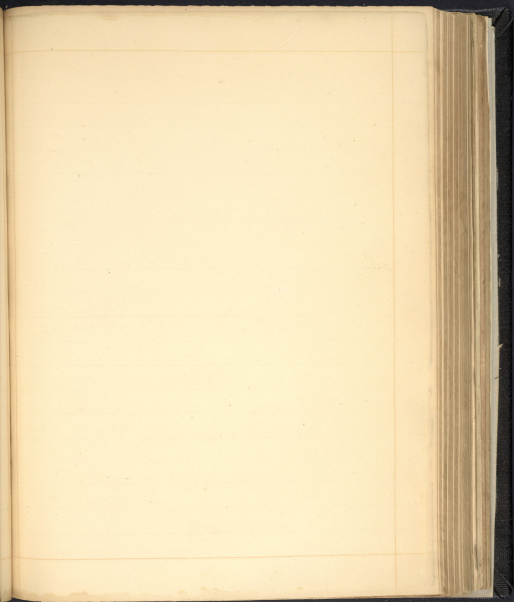
Application of a mercurial plaster, appeared to have a very happy effect as auxiliaries in the cases. In two instances, one of which had a warty excrescence, and the other one or two small fistulous openings through which a slight discharge issued, the ordinary treatment by caustic &c was also used in addition to the foregoing means.

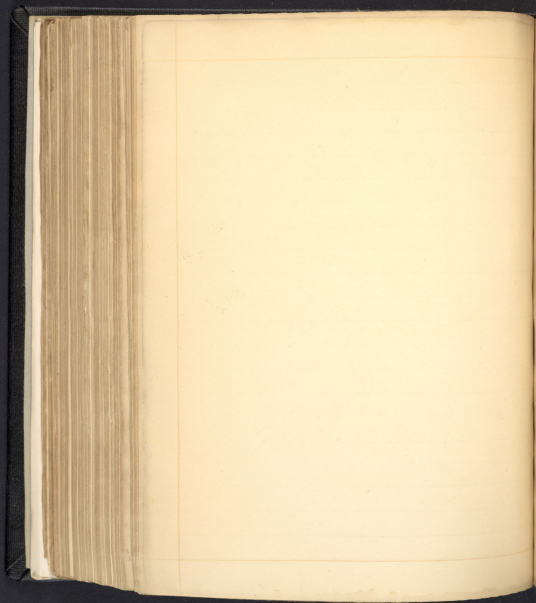
After what has been already said on the practical effect of a treatment grounded on the position which I have advocated, little remains to be said in conclusion. Mercury had in every case a more decided influence than the acids, altho' they were found usefull adjuvants, especially in the concluding stage of the treatment when a tonic influence was wished to be produced. The Mercury was never used to the extent of producing much ptyalism, and the blue-pill was found superior to every other preparation. The ordinary treatment was often used ~~salutary~~ ^{actively}, though not in every case — that is, the bowels were opened by oil when the mercury was not sufficient

in the commencement, which it always was after the
few first days of its administration — Astringents or
emollient poultices were applied to the tumours
when they seemed to indicate a necessity for either,
and in every instance rest was enjoined. But that
the cures, effected, were not owing to these frati-
-tive means, will, I apprehend, be readily admit-
-ted by every practitioner who has had a
reasonable share of such cases to treat. —









4. 1821. 4. 1821.

Wm. H.

Amesbury, 1. 1821.

Ca.

Thompson

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James H.

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